

Ivan Argüelles

# THE STRUCTURE OF HELL

Ivan Argüelles was raised and has lived in various places on planet Earth: Mexico City, Los Angeles, Minnesota, Chicago, New York, Italy, London, and now resides in Berkeley, California, where he is employed as a serials librarian with the University of California. Among collections of poems that he has had published are: *THE INVENTION OF SPAIN* (New York, 1978), *CAPTIVE OF THE VISION OF PARADISE* (Mill Valley, California, 1982), *THE TATTOOED HEART OF THE DRUNKEN SAILOR* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1983), and *MANICOMIO* (Eugene, Oregon, 1984).



Craig -  
to the future  
as librarian  
& ARTIST

Ivan Argüelles

THE STRUCTURE  
OF HELL

Love  
ivan

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DINS AQUESTA VASTA CAMBRA DELS MALS ENDRECOS,  
ON MOLTS DE NOSALTRES HEM DE VIURE, NO ES  
ESTRANY QUE EL "DESORDRE" SIGUI, ENCARA, L'UNIC  
ORDRE POSSIBLE

J. V. Foix

(In this vast room of bad situations, where many of us have  
to live, it is not strange that "disorder" is, nevertheless, the  
only order possible)

*FOR NIKKI IN MEMORIAM*

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the editors of the  
following magazines in which some of these poems first  
appeared:

LONG HOUSE, LOST AND FOUND TIMES, CENTRAL  
PARK, MINOTAUR, ATTICUS REVIEW, PROOF ROCK,  
VELOCITIES, WINDFALL, TOUCHSTONE, IMAGES.

**CANCER WARD**

the ocean in my ear has turned off its siren  
a gypsum foam gathers rushing  
to erase the dark alphabets of my knees  
what dream is so clear it is not utter confusion?  
a bitter asking wrapped in the burning towel  
which is the shadow of the body of my soul  
beneath my fingernails administrators and tax consultants  
with turning brown with indefinite demands  
is it legitimate to ask where is my child?  
night folds its dense starless carpet  
over the black grasses where my eyes grow  
lovers naked and minute lie in the spit of memory  
worried for the calculations of an unknown metal  
the Surgeon knows who drowned from spite  
the Surgeon knows who fixed the door with a cigarette  
the Surgeon understands the ominous increase of white  
what room is this full of liquid tubes?  
all space tilts from the crazy angle of that window  
emptying legendary planets into a sanitary basket  
woman's theme is butter breasts and broader hips  
man's theme is the thin red line that leads to claustrophobia

I pass through the japanese quarter in a dream bus  
a dead fern proceeds through my left side  
needles hundreds of miles long plunge slowly through my arms  
heaven opens its bottle of cerulean ether  
I breathe and lose all earthly shape  
hearing in my other ear the recitation of the desert

## ADRIANOPOLIS OCTOBER 1912

fumes rising from the moon's charred shell  
horse skulls upon which the shadowy women dance  
intoxicated with the left-over sense of burning  
as the world will burn gnawing on animal flesh  
oblivious of the manifesto of light to come  
but the HYSTERIA on the right with its arms of fire  
and the HYSTERIA on the left majestic in its rags  
tottering across the jagged maps of nation states

is this the rage of jacobite and assassin?

I love the machine for expediency  
I love the machine because it is clean  
I love the machine because it is future  
I see it razing the air of its charnel houses  
I see it probing the dark with its language of x-rays  
I see it fixing history once and for all  
outside the dialectic of time

I have spoken with the hypnotist of the old empire  
I have anointed the great turk with the oils of david

but to the sea-coast in agonized dream I rush  
jades and corals multiplying beyond control  
my hands the instruments of antiquity  
delivering clouds from their skeletons  
the future I cry the future is here.

## THE STRUCTURE OF HELL

the psychiatrist unable to sleep plays recordings  
of ophelia hypnotized in a river of eels and ice  
the music winds around invisible columns of sperm  
which angels have left in their insomniac meanderings  
in search of either the perfect post-card or the syllable  
that means hell in the aboriginal language of turkey  
immense curtains of dust obsess the ruined windows where  
faces of ancient and yearning children flicker  
like discarded paper lanterns burning forever  
chords of an insane lyric pattern in the beset mind  
oceanic surges leading to an asylum for ecstatic nuns  
whose gathering is called the divine restaurant  
threads of interpretation bright as blood on the moon  
stones scattered like dice on plates otherwise empty  
a chilling reflection in the wardrobe mirror  
because the christ of ventriloquism has come and gone  
an essay spilled in ethereal ink wrecks the air  
which is the preterite quadrant of orphans and widows  
nine times the good doctor circles the phonograph  
nine times the stellar illusion of those drowned  
with neither blessing nor the right totem animal  
stirs in the imprecise grooves of an archaic sound cylinder  
thomas alva edison responding to a teletape from Pluto  
darkens the remainder of his own death with a stalactite  
borrowed from the greek sessions of moses maimonides  
while herr Doktor breuer is laid out in the viennese suburbs  
a meal for waltzing stallions who derive their verb system  
from the orgiastic rites of hungarian gypsies

three times I try to return the left arm to its sleep  
three times the message of platinum awards flood the sky  
three times a cigarette echoes the industry of the damned

I am a rhythm in two or three lyric themes  
haunted by lorelei whom the composer mahler followed  
deep into the montezuma pine which is a rune on the mountain  
five thousand miles south of the origin of wind and water

FELIZ ANO NUEVO!

## MILK

a drop of ink has been buried in the milk  
and the light of the first door filters through the mask  
of one drinking the milk trying to taste the words  
spelled by the ink in its dissolution  
everything else becomes smaller fits into the coffin  
where my father is preparing his ride  
into an infinity of empty stones and silent reeds  
I turn from the events of sleep massive and endless  
to the daytime of certain grasses to their noons  
precise as needles beneath eyelids  
and remember to the last detail the summer  
when ice came into being on the door-step  
and the air was gathered like a map of brazil  
hot yellow and green filled with voices of flies  
& my mother in textures of main street browns  
appeared for the first time as the most amazing and distant  
of all beings tying kerchiefs around invisible udders  
and drying her eyes with stories known only to the wind  
I am a sailor after all I know adrift  
in a sea of eternal milk and in my ears  
windowpanes stained with a drop of ink buzz  
a hundred thousand whispered words strain  
to fix their cloudy convention in the suburbs  
which spread like vast red sheets from the graveyard  
and a silence as intricate as the bodies of dead children  
consumes me in my vessel of distant sands  
minute by minute their impossible small hands  
undo the extent of my memory draining me of color  
until I fade with my brothers into the glass  
from which the milk was poured

## DAGUERREOTYPE

the universe is wild with the riot of becoming  
night and the weird circumstances of fire and sulphur  
and like photographs just barely glimpsed the luxurious  
masses of women's hair damp and thick with essences  
of mystery and fragrant remote seas  
colliding with the sleeper whose hotel is an empire of beds  
each as intricate as the cities of memory  
and beholding the fragmented and instantaneous moment of being  
the eye is seized with the imperfect nostalgia for grasses  
for linens of clover and salt  
planets come forth from the naked iris  
red and triumphant only to crash with the hemisphere of ice  
and between the eyelids the passing image of the woman  
the impossible extensions of her moon-like skin  
is it noon already in the great hour of descending?  
the order of things becomes confused is reversed  
collapses in layers of sentient smoke  
powerful animals with voices enormous as mountains  
subside in the eternity of the unseen water  
so many intentions and promises sucked into the vortex  
and histories like billiard games carom on the sheet of light  
that precedes the click of the shutter

did I pass thus from the ancient bed  
seized with imperfect remembrances of the infinite love?  
do I proceed from chamber to chamber spelled in darkness  
a larceny of fishes of apostolic lies of dense madness  
processing the cells of lucidity known as consciousness?

silence goes forth from the massive unintelligible volume  
the names of the senators become question marks  
puzzles which not even the poets consider for a background  
the woman who flashed for a second in the fire's reflection  
is joined with the genesis of a stone being hurtled  
into the truths of the future distance  
which is the past returning on its burning cycle

## ELECTROSHOCK

those cadavers and lenin and everyone burning!  
and the lawyer who says there are improprieties in flame  
but who is the judge who decides which assassin goes free  
and which gets strapped to the chair to fry?  
they bring me here backwards on my august mule  
am I crying from too much nature and the right to sample truth?  
the heart is a process of enormous sadness capable  
of outlasting such words as somatology and definitive  
dividing the hair from its root and the nail from its finger  
yet I have been fifteen years in the same shoe  
trying to write a single line in ether and cold azure  
while the child was maimed in the name of medicine  
and the doctors farmed out truth from under the cicatrix  
am I to speak for those unconscious but still living?  
the avenues move through a landscape of eventual mist  
the academics lunch on spine and the universal rose  
the students clamor for better living arrangements  
and all the time locked in a black box below the stitching  
those cadavers and lenin and everyone burning!

## CRANEOTOMY. 1.

angel didnt come furnished with cigarettes  
the top of the room started to float leaving  
cold ingots of sky hanging in mid-air and the dreamers  
of a different eternity talked wildly in whispers  
about the kind of junk you can get on earth  
after the rain and in a room all sound-proofed  
we unfolded all kinds of maps looking for you  
a single red dot flared in the back of the brain  
teeth and a mouth from an ancient statue by the sea  
eyes painted cinematically on the wall and the abrupt  
sense of a pain going right to the bone when the bell rang  
all winter long we tried stoking the fire with stems  
of glass or dried reeds and only smoke appeared  
and the veins in our flesh became the plans of gods  
infusing in us the tea of their symphonies  
wherever we looked they pasted the same poem on the surface  
water came and took away the words a marble foot  
acted in accordance with certain laws of gravity  
the rhythm hammered in our heads by the advocate  
declared nothing to us of the lost hemisphere  
surgeon archaeologist and dental assistant stared  
amazed that we could walk in and out of the mural  
do you remember then when the flame burst forth?

## DEATH MASK

you settled the accounts but the surgeon ignored you  
they talked quietly about the paradise of Vishnu  
uneasy but mellifluous tones drowned out by the brawling  
of a pair of men who had just immolated their wives  
believing firmly in the geographical serenity of the afterworld  
a knife in the smoke the sky blazed futilely  
before the masks came off and the revellers  
their faces stricken with patches of brimstone  
faltered looking for the mistaken grace of the bannister  
before falling totally into the prepared abyss  
you understood then the meaning of the stairs  
even though their cause was an abandoned future  
and the good doctor changing from a blood-stained butcher's smock  
into the hyper-correct phases of a hypnotic uniform  
led you from the fiery ledger where it is written  
that water and its shadow will ever follow  
while nurses with errant photographic concern and wearing  
the vast heads of antlered totem animals arranged the garden  
where each flower is a position for the eye scouring hell  
and there you were conditioned with dark plates  
like enormous x-ray screens and you held your breath  
while the hooded trickster luminous for a brief moment  
captured you for eternity in an attitude of false comfort

from the top floors of the adjacent hotel came cries  
of sleepers whose promised dawn was strangled in brown mufti  
names scattered in the perfumed air shining like the lights  
which are used to code the various ancient constellations

## MY HEART IS THE SNOW THAT NEVER BURNS

does the green angel rot in the wheat? and only once?  
my heart dont go! if you leave the mountain never to return  
and the great negative weathers of epistemology  
howling in the blood of the forests that have been skinned  
by the tact of man for an irreversible future of love!  
my heart is the stone in the wall by the mercury light  
my heart is the fig tree ravaged and alone in the defile  
my heart is the hooded figure cast from the tower  
my heart dont leave me! and the unspeakably beautiful  
gentleman from the Madras Presidency who thought he was SITA!  
I know him as I know the horse who glowers masterfully  
from the summit of the endless noon of the gods  
and what else rots with the green angel only once?  
prayers of childhood delivered in a secret envelope of rice paper  
emissaries sent from a soul haunted by what lives in hell  
ELYSIUM my heart dont leave me! cancer in the air of order  
cancer in the scrotum of the water which fills the delta  
with a strange light of blood edged with gold trim  
my heart! I have glimpsed you only once burning  
arrayed with the enormous theater of the wheat fields  
embroidered with all the eyelids of gehenna  
my heart is the column of shadow that joints heaven to its musk  
my heart is carried by two white bullocks to the pyre!

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIND IS BEING FILLED OUT

But whose are the faces on the battlements?  
moon-haunted chiselled from some ancient ire  
we look up to them as to fragments of a colossal myth  
that broods on the density of its own shadow  
and in the plain a horse-hide drum pounds  
announcing the great Northern Music of a weird fate  
while in the hills crouching like centennial dwarfs  
muses of the subtle Perception declare birthday  
to the elements which are burning underfoot  
and thousands of miles to the east where the red cow  
has been sacrificed for wearing the color of the heath  
the tragedian mimes the Song of Remembrance  
to nations which by dawn are flooding the gates  
symphonically speaking this occurs between vast octaves  
and the library's inner ramparts BURN ignited  
by the fanatic grammarian of barbary wearing his turban  
of injected fuels

in bars functioning on pure air  
the Mexican gardener tunes his cactus to thousand  
degree alcohol from which proceeds a poetry of glyphs  
clipped from millennial stone which the oxen of the sun  
are commanded to eat as if they were tickets  
and the brides of the light-house are marched  
through the wicker-work of stars smoking parched eels  
which are the stigmata of late german philosophy!

## THE SILK WORKSHOP

I draw the long cool thread through her eye  
weathers of clouds softer than memory's water  
form in the minute wound which is her sleep  
billowing mythically in a landscape of severe distance

I spin the shadow around each thumb foregoing abandon  
for a strict inquiry into the soul's process  
a dialogue in sleek currents ensues just below the surface  
where her image wild and dark was first printed

evening comes with its hundred various paper lamps  
chinamen reciting envelopes of abstract religion  
develop photographs of an instant sky with blue streamers  
whose source is the remote cathay of the french poets

she drives the masses of huge soft tissue through the woof  
hands symphonies of inexpressable nostalgia  
the rains begin just beneath the hair-line where it is written  
that miles of skin will obstruct the celestial lake

I fix the dusk of her hair with an invention of fireflies  
I explore the limitless desert with the wedge of fire  
which is her breath after the last star has collapsed  
in the petite basin where she rinses the stains from her tongue

for years an emblem glows in the single window of mind  
she comes and goes dressed as the mask of the forever holiday  
ancient scribes assign to her a house in the zodiac  
legend is the hush around the place where her body sleeps

## A LESSON IN COLLEGE ENGLISH

the iconographers file by dead in my sleep  
each waiting for an aspirin from the Hypnotist  
a viennese melody the first one ever invented  
conveys them like a psychopomp from this world to the next  
we are asked to look for our ears  
we are searched beneath the hair-line for the residual wound  
the judge clocks our response wearing a pornographic leer  
a distance haloed by moon-blight is revealed in the waste  
of the first book of the prussian bible  
there where we are marched corrupted by a byzantine coin  
a florid woman with exactly five tarot cards in her left hand  
pronounces each of us technically dead  
sky unzipped looses a discharge of red litmus paper  
we are given numbers that pronounced correctly  
will provide us with bread in prison  
a house of water with reflecting pools in the roof  
stars buried under the molten granary of its shadows  
a darkness intricate as childhood in analysis  
we are broken in spirit by a great tumbler of ice  
and led forth into a grand waiting room  
where carabinieri in mufti crack lice with their gun butts  
to the far right where the dreams are bled of their sand  
a rusted locomotive sits tilted in the dune  
they say that is where ulysses landed  
when he chanced to visit our island

## VAMPIRE

tropheys of love in the windows and on the door  
but I'm dead I'm hills of ashes and dust  
they signal to me they rush me with hot wires  
that cut right through marrow and nerve  
But I'm dead I feel nothing of this perseverance  
nothing of this technical mastery of life  
and am deposited in catalogs of rust and brine  
where I list reciting the first verses of tripoli  
and they return with their hideous blue litmus paper  
to prove there is no sky above me nor below  
and the mud of their commands turns to exquisite logic  
and they are supreme in their chastity of knowing  
but I am DEAD a fixture in the plaster of reason  
mumbling numbly the runic formulas of love  
devastated by the great aviator Lucifer  
for I have been There also in the Gehenna  
which is the isolation ward of the incurable  
and the korean guards with pig helmets and license  
to kill have asked me nothing spearing the air  
but I know the realm of the dead the ruddy animals  
thrusting snouts in the rich humus of prosperity  
which is but an illusion a bay of invisible water  
a shadow that the famous people wear to the country club  
but I'm dead a statistic a cipher in red litmus paper  
a cloud element of flunked german prose  
rattling cardboard chains and hymning the apollo of the pool  
NO I'M DEADER THAN ALL THAT ABRACADABRA A ROMANIAN  
who has never left the destroyed wall a bat  
albino blind excrescence of ancient latin order  
terminated in the prejudice of the twentieth century

## **ACTS OF QUIET DESPERATION**

who is this skeleton of suicide  
weaving angry bottles around the mirror?  
I will fly into the red weapon of sleep  
a corpse of desire a willing debacle  
through my blank eye fly the oneiric sword  
the hangman the queen of spades  
which will I choose vibrating on the diamond of isolation?  
triumph of stars and lilies are written  
in the geography of the basement of mind  
**PAPERS OF CRYSTAL EYES OF SHADOW**  
the tutelary deity in its feminine gender  
explores the viscera of my inner life  
and my hands are clouds with bullets  
while the language of my invisible self  
eats the raw-hide of an intuitive death  
and my double paces its stairs of air  
with an incomprehensible lyric of frozen parks  
will I dine in the restaurant of chance  
with the dead and amazed poet ABU BEKR?  
I drive up the hair-pin curves of the last highway  
and the rain dances on my brain!  
it is too late in the evening of tautology  
it is already past twilight in the bird-song  
the ancient rhapsodies have no more ink!

## **ABORTION**

if it were the habit merely of seeing through the body  
through the dress the body wears to cover up the bloody lung  
through the skin taken off in the morning and re-dressed at night  
through which the world's cold lace has been riddled  
if it were the habit merely of guessing where the shadow stepped  
where the water commenced by the end of what year in what land  
but instead it is an act solemn and final in a railroad station  
Somewhere in the province where the hunters have frozen  
all the assets and the bankers drown in privilege  
and we are seconded by lymphatic telescopes in the cranium  
and the surgery tables are littered with pariah dogs  
all bearing in some whimsical way resemblances to our names  
from the balcony the ticket-taker hurls confetti  
and a microphone inside the obstetrician's violin announces  
the hypnotic row of places through which the train will roll  
syllables derived from a grammar of veins and hair  
snatched from a mirror where the infanticide went crazy  
trying to pull off what was left of her face

we will be drawn through the dark sieve sleeping clouds  
transformed by images of a peaceful war in ancient grasses  
archaic gods composed of dust and languorous distances  
dancing through the intricate landscape of our last thoughts

## **CUIADO AMIGO**

the featureless pain at the back of the head  
and outside the incessant rain the shoeless oracle  
the debacle at the tip of existence where the needle  
fits the mind and the organism becomes undone  
white turns to red and red turns to black  
sky unfolds like a faded suit and the cards  
tumble to the side-walk used half-eaten memories  
addresses obliterated by a mistaken appointment  
a wrong choice a direction returned to itself  
the wild ink that describes the ultimate page  
you concern yourself with a single detail  
a conical observation within an infinite shuttle  
between two stars and then you catch yourself falling  
or dream that you are erect again talking  
to that woman in a paper hotel forty stories high  
density and the oblique capacity of hair to absorb  
how many shadows have you lost on that stairway?  
they bring you back to a room and though it is home  
you still want to go home wherever that is  
a danger signal marks the left-hand and an arrow  
exactly like an angel proceeds from the right hand  
death flashes her calendar at you and you cannot read  
the days the margins fill with cropped nails  
a horse enters through the window and eats the tickets  
actually it develops into a headache into a desire for sleep  
you yield and skirts of light diminish from view  
your eyes attend the ceremony of quantum darkness  
how could you know the day would end like this?  
an automobile tears through streets of water  
bearing your legend frail and tossed like a leaf  
from the event of its structure of nerve and bone

## **FEAR OF FALLING**

was it a metaphor when I fell?  
the dog leaping between the spaces  
that separate flesh from father  
the bed suddenly no more than a page of water  
the floor an abstract of immense density  
where the blind angels with their contusions  
waited to spear me with accusations of love  
how could I know the next moment was forever?  
a straw in the mouth of the word for mother  
impossibilities of the kingdom of the soul  
the intricate passageway called mind  
being emptied of its dark grasses

which was that animal that playing  
knocked me down from the realm of the senses?

they showed me the photograph of the eyelid  
reversed on itself in spires of light  
organs of delicate balance gone askew  
the science of revival in the embryonic dust  
honoring the head but not what it says

## CRANEOTOMY. 2.

pushed to the edge by squadrons of flame  
hidden in ravines of smoke too tired to sleep  
I began to see the secret forms of angels  
the doctors informed me of the body's passing  
their mouths filled with liquid pages of the Lost Book  
who could predict the sound of tool against bone?  
seraphic as a music of pure intelligence rocking in metal  
the ancestral voices drowned forever in ether  
how did I know of the chemistry of the Law?  
keys to the flowers of spain dust of algebra  
where the old coffin with its wild eyelids  
stays awake scanning the painted sky for a sign  
they lay me down there with the inhabitants of ice  
and scored the infinite nerve for its rock  
nothing eternally nothing in that hour of time  
I put my head to one side to prevent the dreams  
from escaping into the clinical version of light  
the horse my companion in silence turned to water  
hooves that pounded in mineral core the code  
gone fluid in the strange unwinding they call mind  
majesterial in their gowns of blood the surgeons  
explored the depths for the animal of fever  
the heart a cry from the hair-line a hand numbed  
the how many numbers of hell uncounted in their scheme  
QUALITY OF LIFE THE GOOD DOCTOR SAID IN HIS DRUM OF ALCOHOL

## PIRACY

buckets of blood in which the moon verbs are washed  
giant boiled squid the remembrance of a lost constellation  
copulate in the brass cove of the fandango dancer  
your voice walks through haunted stone a trellis  
of smoke or the furious ivy of the yard-arm  
the french pilgrims with their great pikestaffs  
sink slowly through the watery lesions of ancient grammar  
sabots of dust cutlasses the size of the sky!  
it says in the text that the drowned are ineffable  
I prepare the stage with mirrors of death & innocence  
your voice your magnificent unconscious voice  
sails like a flag through the evidence of botany

### THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

it rides the tide definitely into the red moon  
below the pared nails of the holy cipher  
below the balance where measures of gold and deceit  
are weighed against the furious alloy of time  
it buckles under the bridge of air beneath hair  
that has perfected the dream where cured of cancer  
the hag of death presides more beautiful than ever  
she distributes grades to the failed lovers!  
she smiles and the ruddy animals of the prophet  
sink in the great invitation of water  
will I ever wake from this dream of shipwrecks?  
a hand no larger than the mind that conceived it  
descends through epic quantities of sky  
warriors already ghosts dried of their blood  
rise through phantom cities into the cloud  
where I sit wrapped in sheets of blank pages  
I watch with a terrific and blind nostalgia how the waves  
wash all horizons away and voices of the drowned  
address me with colors of sand and ink  
AN END TO THE UNIVERSE OF INDESTRUCTIBLE MUSIC

### APHASIA

with what secret syllables I strive for darkness  
I mean when I open the window and sleep in the bulb  
planted deep beneath my wounded side I mean the night  
I cant remember the victory of the golden oracle  
nor in what hospital the battle happened I mean  
when the agents with their huge black wings hastened  
through the needles with their ropes of fire I  
mean the veins the stitching the incandescent opal  
my eyes under the tongue my shoulders hidden in weight  
I think unless the operation on my hair or is it grass?  
legend takes her skirts and throws them out the mirror  
a knife a spoon a flashlight no a battery I need  
the super-nova in my brain I mean the wounded mind  
hoops and dashes and commas except I am asleep  
again and the bed is a statue of marble laid on its side  
and the soul it is me fractured crystal paper of smoke  
each hand seeks the other in the circle of treaties  
broken where the concordance was supposed to be  
rhymes corrupted by ivy myths severed from their day  
I dream a chair with wheels with speed and time  
to be other than what I mean planting seeds in the reflection  
spirals of vegetal breath the crown of chalk the moon  
it descends on its wistful axle I catch it I mean  
am I dead then here housed in the waist of water?

## **AN ACCOUNT OF THE ILLNESS**

if the child wakes he hears roads of zoos  
falling through hundreds of years of soft earth  
a detailed man with ceramic clothes and a dictionary  
with pictures of illicit flowers approaches  
in his eyes the teeth of an envelope eat flame  
animals blind with vertigo fall from his hands  
a water pure as the end of the constellation pours from  
the words he uses to command the construction of illness  
the fever begins to climb through biological abstracts  
a sky stolen from the geography of asia minor  
unfurls like a cool silk flag against the window  
where the rain leaks its myriad faces of sleep  
the child unravels the moon's crimson thread  
clouds of grammatical error burst silently open  
other details assert their heavy clothing against the horizon  
the intricate thoughts of insects are pressed  
on the pillow's underside which fills with a liquid  
much like the echo of the sound the man makes  
as he finishes the lace scaffoldings that support  
the immense thermometer in the child's mouth

## **THE UNBEARABLE IRRELEVANCE OF THE SELF**

indecipherable history of exiles illumined by sky's chainsaw  
lyric depravity terrific nostalgia for the ruins of gardens  
apocalyptic children in love forever with the desperate other  
slow cadaver of the hours that devour the lost memory

nothing is restored transitory winds words days the wall of ire  
they turn exiled from the garden the sign of Momus on the brow  
madness the condition of darkest valleys of broken wings  
they surrender to the bone hidden in the sphinx's great immobile mout.

enigmatic splendor of that lost afternoon in an ignored nation  
landscape after landscape of centuries unpopulated but for epitaphs  
dualities of dust mirages of eternity in erased symbols of life & death  
echoes of leaf and grass darkening beneath the inevitable cloud

they have spent the eternal moment in the hotel of the lotus eaters  
sand has perfected the names of their hundred and one cities  
the dream of the ghost of the ether of time sings like a thread  
in the abyss that is neatly folded between either ear

## INJUSTICE

injustice the wayward fiend  
his paintings are spoiled the grass cropped  
at the edge where his lake grows  
beyond the canvas and wild dogs  
like eyeless gypsies on their stumps  
tear the sky open rust!  
the capital of death floats  
just below the surface  
injustice the liquor-thief of time  
steps on a wave  
the color red with its dictionary  
imbues the water with dark lace  
upheavals in the lesser strata  
trigger off domino diplomacy  
hangmen with the sleep of wax  
pressed in their eyes  
distribute the empty loaves  
to those who have lost the road

## SAINT ERECTION DAY

what is this monstrous affliction in my head?  
PERJURY the woman I loved dead a fossil  
dust turning in the eye of a hangover  
rumors of cinzano and wars so many distant wars  
the soul is a prize in the dark shrubbery  
where the turkish onanist sleeps unguarded  
but my head today is a nation of doubting tombs  
I climb the spire of saint erection day  
and the woman I loved I see her next to the stilts  
which reason uses to enter the sea  
great transparent fish consume her  
they leave her fossil on a crimson rune  
there are too many thoughts about what has happened  
I fix my horse with tickets of spleen and oblivion  
I wire the next port that the dream is on its way  
"you have to be selective about the foreign capitals you visit"  
this monstrous affliction which is my head!

## MEDICAL CHECK UP

at a distance from poetry the doctor struggles with blood  
horses with ladders & thermometers come running  
swift as a page of water in the picture of hell  
the chancre of a black wind or a skeleton of pure joy  
the fever in a deck of cards checked by the insular ice  
of a treaty forged in the druggist's feigned sleep  
all hazard is invited to the consultation by mirror  
lean to the west! commands the nurse of spit  
the moon's cold ovaries appear like ghost dolphins on the screen  
where hypnotic cures for memory are written in syllabic characters  
wax figures besiege the trojan monument of pills  
I descend through the dense theory and heat of cotton  
to the well where the death of love is prescribed  
"how many parents have you had in a lifetime?"  
I dont understand the question I fail the test  
a latin elegist with a silver head-plate flies through the air  
the office turns upside down diminishing in the ash tray  
where talking cigarettes converse with the turkish surgeon  
"no man is an island" the good medic's voice shakes  
his hands divide the curtains of light from the x-ray  
my lungs explode like flowers of mercury  
I am lost in the vast orbital numbers of the cicatrix

## AN ACCOUNT OF MY EARACHE

with hair-line agape and a silk ankle  
I go boating through the mind's profound rug  
the wind folds up the grain of words  
the waves flush with victory grow stiff  
turning impossibly golden in the tepid noon  
a siren blows in the ear's opium portal  
sleep the great nostalgia for darkness  
spreads its breath into the purple sails  
I am sent to the horizon beyond the islands  
whose geography is an ornate sound pattern  
my lung fills with a decadent flower  
a mist covers my eyes my skin rolls off  
somewhere in the land of my spine a hand  
unwinds the thick rope of memory  
dense as oil my body's drum drops to the surface  
pricked by the sun's surgical needles  
and I dream I am ripe with death  
infinite soundless floating towards  
the air's belabored spice fields  
a ulysses of smoking hemp I tilt off balance  
a black sombrero covers my face  
the lace of circe's unkempt hair  
drives consciousness from my voice  
I am absolutely alone in a world of bells!

## HORN OF ROLAND

I walk out of the photograph accompanied  
by the great dead fishes of antiquity  
I put on my face adjust my bones  
destroy my hair rephrase my skin and smile  
I wonder who all the voices in the grass  
are or if the harbor where time is anchored  
has been ruffled by the infidel's red burnoose  
a black lesson of clouds proceeds from my mouth  
the evidence of a luminous skeleton  
the proof of the wind's darkened history  
a lesion predicted in the opium bloom  
I sense these things in the tapestry  
where the fall of wondrous cities is depicted  
I walk through the dispersal of treaties  
of napkins & geological maps of the moon  
the color white descends in sheets  
I sense the rain I herald the thunder  
a searing flame cold and shaped like a needle  
passes simultaneously through my temples  
& I am aloft on death's ivory elephant  
separating the spokes of blood and leaf  
with the paper steeple of my tongue

## DEATH OF CALISTO

disaster written on the paving stones  
the weeks the months the days the last hour  
drugged on love incoherent the lace of time  
snapped from night's hyacinth wrist

one false step on the ladder the void  
not a moment wasted in placing wagers on death  
the head broken in three parts the brains  
gathered by an invisible hand of the stars

for why do we live this strange dream?  
on the telephone they said the parents knew nothing  
Melibea lied the servants had their heads cut off  
there was nothing about tomorrow but glass

below the dust where they trim the grass  
where the coffins get up and talk and dance  
where the handsome rooster named socrates  
gets drunk they are celebrating this drama

professors with cool hair and dead eyes discuss  
the renaissance in terms of philology  
whose marriage to mercury they declare a fraud  
it is all commerce and a fast trip to the top

horses with the names of ancient panderers  
calmly eat the last traces of the ladder  
a gypsy woman with no eyes at all sees the future  
writhing on the painted palms of her hands

options of love greed lust desire phantoms smoking  
in the back of a lost railroad car with knives  
planted in their breastplate deride the peninsula  
where cruelty is the best part of the daily bread

## ROMANTIC ERA

now when I think of angel I think death  
the darkest summer cold river between the ears  
immense skies whorled like marble in the horse's eye  
a rain of frozen trees in their primary green  
on the landscape of a lost carpathian kingdom

now when I think of shepherd I think death  
cool and blank the nameless season below the hair-line  
ingots of surgical gold poured into the mind  
which is seized with dreaming of leafy seas  
and the endless circuit where they invent sand

now when I think of paradise I think death  
miles of black skin released in the empty quarry  
which is called greece by the pharmacologist of time  
islands dense with raped statuary and the brute navy  
of that great and dead cyclops Lord Nelson

now when I think of love I think death  
the intense white drug that undoes the brain  
sleeping through centuries of wild ciphers  
animals princely and blind corrupting on the gold horizon  
waiting for the storm of bleeding tickets

now when I think of death I think DUPLICATES  
swooning on verandahs of lace and snow in the one autumn  
mirror to mirror with the brother of the shadow's bride  
locked in the abrupt embrace of two soldiers  
whose teeth are set on the vast thread of the Invisible

## GLEICH WIE DER REGEN UND SCHNEE VON HIMMEL FALLT

we must be prepared for the orthographic variations  
for the extreme deviations in the light by the broken pane  
for the length of syllabic quality in the prejudiced rhyme  
for the doctor whose cunning prescription is death itself

descending on the minor key bass chord backwards in the mirror  
the color of snow the emotional texture of rain turning to snow  
the density of scar tissue just below the roots where the hand turns  
the key in the corrupted lock where the myths are stored

genesis of weather in the ear-ache and the drum pounding  
until sleep becomes its own exegesis and the dreamer haunted  
by what wakes in the clouds revolves the thermometer in his head  
and dials somewhere into the abyss the missing finger of ink

names explode silently collapsed behind thick walls of dust  
medieval city states devoured by metropolitan cockroaches pass  
through the drain flushed by the concord of scientific technique  
I am alert to the lust in the very last accent in the depth!

depravity in the music of water and in the shadow of fire  
voices of a broken choir resound like needles in the hypnotist's eye  
childhoods of fauns and centaurs are left to bleed on the grass  
fathers of duplicitous intent tune up their wild violins

years of humming the opposite lyric against nurses of memory  
hands attached to the eyes of dead hummingbirds sent in reverse  
mountains where the mad have climbed lingering for the picnic  
of moon spine and the exquisite hymn of the poisoned tidal wave

defiant in the exercise of kneeless gymnasts reciting plato  
I wed the Daughter of the Sun the one who turned the swine to song  
and pass as beams of ethereal sound into the blank euphrates  
a foreigner to the country where I learned the dreaded chant

## **HUMAN BITTERLY HUMAN**

the descent into anxiety into the talking leaves  
endlessly inquiring about minutia and rubble  
the languages broken in their spine by hysteria  
& the great noon-time when nothing but sleep is resolved

I go back to the nether country to the blind children  
to the vast meal sacks filled with counter values  
where the gods have deposited their weighty tongues  
and I hear the babble of antediluvian dreams

the dross of thought levelled on onion-skin paper  
the cities of enormous pride flattened by the critical tooth  
heaven itself opened and shut by the coal-miner's fall  
the seas rushing in to claim their bitter gold

my shoulder speaks to the clouds and the clouds are bombs  
a havoc of shattered wagons plunging with the glacier  
my needs are halved and the mute priests reduce the halves  
distributing their dull knees to the church of despair

where can I turn on the hour of ultimate grass?  
strange animals still in hypnosis probe the wound  
which persists beneath the thumb-nail licking it clean  
of the viscera of ideas while red angels bang cymbals

I am deaf with virtue I echo the gun-laws of liquor and crime  
I steep the poem into its residual elements bleeding  
all over the fierce page of water where I am to sign my life  
the decrees are out and I am condemned to speech

## **A FOREIGNER IN PARADISE**

### **I ACQUIRE A NEW LANGUAGE**

I raise the sensuousness of the grass into flame  
& sleep in the intricate eyelid of the embolism  
three decades of sapphire and heliotrope in vitro  
gulf-streams of ancient deaths pour through me

in the dense idiom of the turkish gold-filers  
I discourse with the profligate remnants of time  
the cruel hour of the teeth of classical angels  
cuts the sky into remote and unequal halves

I float through Their hotels an embryo of hair  
mothers of terrible and inane digits call to me  
winds rush through the tubular chains of identify  
erasing me as I plunge like flame through soil

at the roots small mouths hammer their lips into water  
gray bishops of tungsten and iodine flog me with litanies  
afternoons of radiance and shuddering are pressed into the leaf  
white roots of love tangled in the bone of imminent truth!

tongues ears wild syllables of backwards horses  
the mountain of language reared on the portico of light  
edges of feathers and brass tom-toms and alcohol of drums  
I embrace the second part of the stem and rise to the lyric

a dreamer on the fierce pedestal of circumstance  
I see the avenue of Alpha and Omega storm through the blade  
traffic of cunning surgeons of knives of insane fishes  
flushed from the arcade into oblivion's dense white linen

## THE GREAT FISH OF EXILE AND MY FATHER

the Indians are wearing lenin's mask  
no it is the mask of my father age thirty-five  
I am going to Luneberg to study the signs  
the fossil of my body has appeared on the screen  
a great fish with languid phosphorescent eyes  
devouring the grammar of beauty and its wild grasses  
but those Indians in the bar stomping up and down  
with their painted moustaches and lenin masks  
and the key to my sister's evil past  
THE RIVER OF THE STARS HAS NO SOURCE  
it is noontime on the holiday map and an airplane  
is taking mother to the correct hotel of the zodiac  
while my father climbing off the wall  
proceeds to spear invisible and angelic fish  
darting through the antediluvian sky  
and on the radio it says there is a fire sale  
and immigrants from bogota swarm the plaza  
using the mutilated dialect of pizarro to express  
their analphabetic desire of ongoing revolution  
and lenin dressed in tattered buffalo robe  
indignant as the zeus of children's literature  
scours the heavens for a single answer  
they peel the beard off his piano  
they enunciate in the precise pyrenees dialect  
the very way roland's horn sounded on paper  
my father never does find the way home  
the piano is destroyed by gilt octopods  
the founder of barcelona looking just like the painter Miro  
directs him through the oneiric traffic  
into the bed where the starfish are x-rayed  
etymologists with degrees in ecstatic hypnosis  
convey his shadow through the sculpted bone  
and mother rises from the rug a persian gazelle  
whose planet of water has just been invented

## I CORRECT THE SALUTE TO THE DEAD

I emphatically deny all categories of hope  
the contemporaneous tuesdays with their market mustaches  
the whip-lashed botany with its tooth of mercury  
the edges of the biblical and imperative mask  
the months charged with assault in full mid-day  
I regret the accents with which they pass judgement  
those sleepwalkers of hypnotically beautiful regression  
reciting passages from the great medical texts  
of reversal and light in oneiric taxonomy  
I shoot out the vast windows of unrepeatable azure  
where attestations to the existence of gods flicker  
like the tails of childish and potential stars  
I approach without trepidation the immense doors  
of the Fraudulent Surgeon who washed innocence of its cure

what can ever last of this flimsy and brief spark?  
the silver stubble of the mines of the soul is burning again!

## A TOURIST IN HELL

I salute the great somnambulants of Botany!  
these are no cheap imitations of the dead  
but the very dead in human and dreaming skin

I cry reading their texts of opaque water  
my shoulders philosophize on the contradictions  
which are both growth and the stimulus to death

UNKNOWN ELEMENTS IN THE GRAPH OF LIMPID PYRAMIDS  
a hundred souls smoked in a single luminous cigarette  
flowers of the radiant south of morphine forever burning!

their cities come back to me in vast elemental leaves  
criss-crossed with the fine inks of a brain-storm in china  
nowhere does it say how we shall return

I encounter enormous hotels of paper and grass  
columns like weaving women support the myth of the roof  
I lay the body down beneath the palm-bark fan

symbolisms of iodine and cotton wadding are expressed  
in the skin's intricate radios and the hallucination  
of the famous doctor corrodes beneath the eyelid

someone has repeatedly shouted my name in the corridor  
it is the afternoon of the end of time  
in my pockets their photographs leave permanent holes

the tickets have been destroyed in a game of chance  
the police have come to restore order to the sleep of reason  
I am returned to the illegible conclusion in fine print

## THE LESSON OF ALCOHOL

I have yearning for the great claustral forms of water  
for the submerged bells of philosophy that ring  
in the haunted eras of the deaf who have seen the light  
I sit alone while the crowds swirl drunkenly around me  
birds swoop through the tavern so low they peck at their shadows  
the dead who still stand stiff at the bar gaze with dignity  
into the overt mirror of their terrible past sorrow  
but I am drunker than all poised on the chair of infinity  
fractioned from the nerve that bore me through hell  
a hand paints me in clouds of winged and unrepeatable azure  
I surface on the glass with the dolphins of antiquity  
the fossils of hair of the famous matrons drift like dust  
I become opaque sad dense a wild adolescent demanding paternity  
echoes and mirages of some nostalgic and distant willow arbor  
I sink through a music of thirds and minor treble keys  
musk the odors of the female deltas and skins of fierce wine  
assemble like friends in the crowded apex of my eyelid  
the Self I cry must be erased with all its dross and feathers  
it is not gold nor the image of gold but a random idea  
colored by the blind bead-maker who works in the back mind  
I assert nothing more and return my palms to the covert bottle  
I remove my acute and grave accents I sleep in the circumflex  
where the remote animals of the hallucination of water  
master their celestial roles booming in impossible skies

### FOR MAX ON HIS WAY TO PHILADELPHIA

I care for the tooth for the eye for the dense  
memory behind the hair for the meadows in the cavity  
for the scar-line which has never healed  
I care for the child wounded by the photograph  
by the killing light of the disease without name  
for the blood shed in earnest behind doors of ether  
I care for the sky glimpsed in sleep for the sea  
packed beneath the right ear-lobe for the amputated  
half of thought for the circles that cannot be  
I care for the essence of grass locked beneath the tongue  
for the food kept at a distance from its own disaster  
for the spool unwound somewhere past the hand  
I care for the fingers that cannot grasp meaning  
for the legs bent by the bed's sad complexity  
I care for the insane howl of the back brain  
severed from the intensive unit of reason

### DE RERUM NATURA

I don't tolerate the flowers of the Victor  
the prismatic language in which the Victor speaks  
when poised on the scalpel of delivery  
as he bears the backwards infancy of my childhood  
among the many death's heads which adorn him  
I reject the luminous alphabets of the Victor  
I have nothing to do with the words they spell  
they are cadavers burning with secret fires  
I prefer the stupendous drums of the king of Wine  
where I weigh the irreversible hell of my double  
the universe is not with me when I sleep  
and I sleep daily in the dieresis of my tympanum  
I dream not of the Victor but of the end of my brain  
when I wake I am weird and remember nothing  
of that awful and vast white page of nostalgia  
the doctors cease attending my rites  
the priests and shamans spurn my resurrection  
**THE POVERTY OF BOOKS AND THEIR ENDLESS ASH**  
blind asterisks which are the detritus of stars  
projections of a compass through my eyes  
world after world corrupts in the fame of the lie  
I do not surrender to the Victor's phonetic decay  
I count my change in a different language  
forbidding the rutting mares of the wind  
to deflect me from the great Purpose  
this is the unbearable existence of the spleen!  
inordinate values superimposed on the water  
I am at the end of the seven principles of life  
I deny the Victor his tremendous ovations  
in my blood the wires become sonant and wild  
I receive messages from the damned that it cannot be!

## THE POETRY READING

I wake with trouble in my ear  
the grass in my brain has grown black  
the cadavers of thought and time stink  
naked I step through the mirror  
looking for a very cold glass of lemonade  
my tongue is in distress  
angels with rusted iron feet have trampled  
on its surface and pulled at the teeth  
under my arm a strange lump wants attention  
La Cubana takes her sweater off  
right in front of my eyes  
it wants to be paradise but it is only  
the cemetery of my final bed  
I wander through the paper rooms  
striking down the walls with my breath  
ancient images of scribes gone blind  
recording the events of history  
do nothing to make me feel secure  
a text is pressed into my palms  
patches of words now obsolete or forgotten  
an invisible presence leads me to the podium  
and I am greeted with animal disdain  
pictures of my father and leon trotsky  
burn in the very back of the salon  
a broken piano is put into service  
accompanying my voice's haunted want

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